

January 15, 2003

Rebecca Kane
Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance
MC 2222A

Dear Ms. Kane,

Thank you for making critical data about facility performance available to the public on-line. Public access to this information will benefit both the regulated community as well as the public. Facilities that regularly comply with the law will have their records opened for all to see and their good track records can be lauded, while facilities that are often in violation of the law will be forced to explain their actions to the communities they harm the most, and thus will likely be more accountable. I commend EPA for beginning the work to make this information available to the public.

Features of the site that are particularly useful include:

- * Listing whether the facility is in noncompliance in the current quarter, as well as the number of quarters the facility has been in noncompliance over the previous eight quarters, as is done in the "Compliance Summary Data."
- * Information on the CWA/NPDES Compliance Status, detailing if facilities were in noncompliance or Significant Noncompliance, at which discharge point, and in which quarter.
- * The environmental conditions of the receiving waters.
- * The site is relatively easy to navigate. Having links to the "Data Dictionary" by each section of the water facility reports is helpful, it is easy to search by facility number or name, as well as many other parameters.

Still, the site could be improved in the following ways:

- * The site should be searchable country-wide. The limitation on the number of results that can come from a single search is an unfortunate constraint to the site.
- * The Permit Compliance System currently includes information on stormwater, general, pretreatment and CAFO permits, but this information is not yet available on ECHO. There is no reason why this information should be excluded.
- * ECHO should include more pollutant release data such as: air emission inventory, hazardous waste generation (from Biennial Reporting System), and overall permitted loadings for each Clean Water Act chemical.
- * ECHO should include Notices of Violation taken by EPA or states.
- * ECHO should allow searching for spills reported to the emergency response notification system (ERNS).
- * Significant amounts of data are missing from certain states - for example California. If states do not report information on every major facility in their state, the data is compromised, and that appears to be the case for California. The web site should make it very clear that EPA and California have failed to report data on all major facilities, and indicate and name the number of major facilities for which there is no data. EPA and the states should be taking active steps to ensure that all data for major facilities in the state are reported.

* EPA should work with states to get Clean Water Act "minor discharger" violations added to the system. This is significant because 90 percent of all dischargers are classified as "minor." When a search is conducted for major and minor facilities, the resulting table should clearly indicate which facilities are major and which are minor, which is not the case currently.

* Information about when facilities were inspected, by whom, and details about the type of inspection and enforcement action taken are needed for users to understand the extent of oversight.

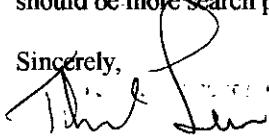
* More detail needs to be provided on the type of inspection performed so that citizens know how thorough an inspection was - for example, who performed the inspection and was it a random, unannounced inspection? Did it last several days or several hours? How much effluent was sampled, and for what? What was learned from the inspection?

* Instead of merely providing percentages for violations, citizens should have access to the underlying data, so that one can determine the quantities discharged.

* Data should be available for as many years as EPA has it. There is no reason that data should be provided only for the past two years. Also, even if ECHO does not show all historic violations, at least it should show all enforcement actions.

* Information about the demographic profile of the surrounding area is very useful and helpful. There should be more search parameters for demographics.

Sincerely,



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